

Archbishop Smith: Yes

This is the Blessed Mother's lesson to us. Always say "yes" to God.

I write this on the Solemnity of the Annunciation, which recalls Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she had been chosen by God to be the virgin mother of His incarnate Son. As we all know, she gave her unqualified fiat, "let it be done," to this wondrous call from the Almighty. Her "yes" arose from her complete trust in the goodness, wisdom and providence of God. Mary shows us that God is fully worthy of our trust. He knows what He is doing and the purpose for which He calls us. "Let me think about it;" "I'm not quite sure I can do this;" "Surely you could think of someone better to choose." These and similar responses are all the wrong answers when God calls. The only right answer is "yes."

On this same day we have all received the joyful news of the appointment by Pope Francis of an Edmonton priest, Father Stephen Hero, as Bishop of the Diocese of Prince Albert. Now Bishop-Elect Hero gave his "yes" to the call of God reaching him through the voice of the Church, and we are very grateful that he did! Here in Edmonton we are deeply sorry to see him leave us, of course, but know that he will make a wonderful Bishop. The clergy, religious and lay faithful of Prince Albert Diocese are blessed to receive him as their new Shepherd, and the Church in Canada will now be enriched as he becomes a member of the episcopal college.

The "yes" of the Blessed Mother, which inspires the "yes" of every disciple of the Lord, is a salutary reminder to examine our own response to God's call. We live in a world marked more by "no" than "yes" when it comes to the things of God. It is important, therefore, that we examine our lives daily to see how much of this negative stance before God might be infiltrating our own mindset and behaviours. Wherever there is, in fact, a "no" – to the commandments, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the teachings of Christ's Church, or the will of God inscribed in nature – and so on, pray that the Lord, by his love and mercy, will so touch our hearts as to turn that defensive "no" into a willing "yes".

On Sunday we enter Holy Week, those days in which the complete and unconditional "yes" of Jesus to the will of the Father is on full display. Jesus enables us to give our "yes" to God by granting us a share in his own (cf. 2Corinthians 1: 18-20). As we meditate, then, in deep gratitude, on the full surrender of Jesus to the will of the Father, let us pray that he grant us a participation in his fiat. When many around us are of the view that the way to happiness is via a "yes" to self and a "no" to God, Jesus and the Blessed Mother show that the truth is just the opposite. The fullness of joy is ours only when we deny ourselves and give the full surrender of our lives, in and through Christ, to the will of our heavenly Father.



The grotto of the Annunciation at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. It is believed to be where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Blessed Virgin Mary.